

Rutgers Political Science: In at the Beginning

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Roy Licklider and I go back the better part of fifty years in the profession. He remains a dear friend, and I was thus unable to refuse his invitation to contribute my thoughts and (frequently inaccurate) recollections about the Rutgers Department of Political Science of which I was a faculty member for almost twenty years and in which I had the honor and pleasure of serving as chair for the last five of those years. Indeed, for one month in the summer of 1988 during which I moved to Iowa State University, I had the unusual experience of chairing two departments at the same time owing to differences in their respective fiscal years. And I recall with immense fondness and still possess the several volumes of *Little House on the Prairie*, which he presented to myself and my wife Rhoda to read to my daughter Rachael who was born later in the year. If any of you who read this contemplate moving, remember that you will leave behind some very close and irreplaceable friends.

Some events, as you shall see, remain clear in my memory, while others have been obscured by the passage of time. In what follows I will name those whom I recall fondly but will avoid naming those whom I regard with less warmth or respect. Those who were my colleagues will probably know to whom I am referring, but I will, I am sure, maintain a respectful silence about the identities of those unnamed few.

I arrived in New Brunswick in the summer of 1969, at a tumultuous time when those of us who taught and did research in international relations and foreign policy were necessarily focused on the Vietnam War. I had spent the previous two years in a temporary position at my alma mater, Swarthmore College, where I had constructed an

interdisciplinary course on the war at the request of students who knew little about a conflict for which they might be conscripted.

In reality, at the time there was no single department of political science at the university level. Instead, there was fissiparous and uneasy “federation” of undergraduate college departments, each with its own faculty, chair and college dean and a single “superchair” (the unofficial title of that individual) at the graduate level. The several colleges at the time were Rutgers College (coeducational), Douglass College (for women), Livingston College (coeducational and the most recently established), and an evening college (University College), which then consisted mainly of a single individual and a number of temporary faculty. Each of the college departments had its own culture.

The Rutgers College department was known as a collection of folks from out of the 12th century (CE). Douglass was regarded as egalitarian owing to the fact there one senior member and a group of young faculty (Roy, Bob Kaufman, Harvey Waterman, Sandy Schwartz, et. al.) who had been hired at virtually the same time, and Livingston was regarded as thoroughly modern, geographically isolated, and relatively radical. Irving Louis Horowitz of Livingston, although a sociologist and at that stage in his ever changing political existence far left on the political spectrum, arrived at a meeting on his motorcycle. I turned to a colleague who was seated next me and asked him who the large person who strode the earth like a colossus. The response was memorable: “Why, that’s Irving Horowitz. See the leather jacket he is wearing? I’m told he took off the still warm body of C. Wright Mills.”

I was in the Rutgers College department, which was then located in a large three-floor house on Union Street next to a fraternity house, a fact which made the spring

something to be feared owing to empty bottles and incredibly loud music. Most faculty shared an office though a few were housed in tiny cells that resembled the punishment huts in Stalag 17. At the entrance, seated behind what seemed like a croupier's room in a casino sat Beulah, our secretary and ruler of all she surveyed. In other words, she ran the joint with an iron hand. Ben Barber, who arrived the same year as I did, handed her his syllabus and was told that "at Rutgers we generally assign more Plato." Those who knew Ben (who sadly recently passed away), know he was hardly a shrinking violet, but on that occasion he was truly speechless.

At that time New Brunswick was an ugly city with little to commend it. Shortly thereafter, it underwent renovation and gentrification with the financial help of the university and Johnson & Johnson, It used the old fashioned and currently unacceptable way to accomplish this – pricing low income residents out of their homes and ultimately their city. But it at least meant the opening of some first-rate restaurants, which I imagine you still enjoy. The city was also the home of a large number of Hungarian residents including a number who had fled or encouraged to leave after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The irrepressible and charming David Schwartz learned just enough Magyar to campaign successfully for a seat in the state legislature.

So ghastly were our offices that we were thrilled to move to Murray Hall some years later and were delighted by our new abode in the basement of that building, centrally located on the Rutgers College campus. Most of the offices had no windows, and the few that did (which were obtained through seniority) looked out at the undercarriages of autos in the parking lot. You will realize that after the department was amalgamated and moved to Hickman the Rutgers College continent was especially

delighted. Ben, who had earned his reputation for his scholarship on democracy, and who had become a senior member, nevertheless, argued vigorously that the offices be distributed by seniority. And that was how it was done.

The graduate faculty would meet from time to time (later including graduate representatives) to discuss issues of relevance to the graduate program, including the hiring of faculty at one of the several college departments who would also serve in the graduate program. To be hired, therefore, required the approval of both an undergraduate college department including its chair and the “federated” graduate department and its “superchair.” We frequently referred to the arrangement as resembling the Holy Roman Empire, which as Voltaire had noted “was neither holy, nor, Roman, nor an empire.”

The superchair of the federated department at the time I was hired was James Rosenau, who had previously been a member of the Douglass faculty and was rightly regarded as among the leading and most visible scholars in international relations. I had met Jim the previous year at Swarthmore where I had invited him to serve as an outside examiner in the college’s honors program. I still recall the core essay question he asked on his exam (though not its precise wording). “The U.S. invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965 and the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. ‘All great powers act in the same way.’ Discuss.” The question reflected what Jim had called his “pre-theory” of a subfield in comparative foreign policy which he had pioneered and which diverged drastically from the work of my undergraduate mentor, Kenneth Waltz, the epitome of realist theory.

Jim was the reason why I was eager to interview at Rutgers and ultimately accepted its offer. (I believe the same had been true of Roy a year earlier.) When I

interviewed, however, I knew virtually nothing about the federated system and was only familiar with Jim's scholarship and that of Gerry Pomper, who I think was then chair of the Livingston department and a star in the subfield of American politics. What struck me as odd was that I was first interviewed by Jim as well as the several senior members of the Rutgers College faculty in political science, then chaired by a specialist in urban politics. Two of the others specialized in comparative politics, one with an emphasis on Burma and the other on Europe, and the fourth specialized in public law.

For reasons that still elude me, my department's senior members loathed Jim, perhaps jealousy regarding his professional standing or perhaps the necessity of getting his approval for hires and for other aspects of the program. Jim was also associated with the "scientific study" of IR and he and Klaus Knorr edited a major volume on the subject in 1969. The senior faculty in the Rutgers College Department very definitely did not agree with Jim's perspective. At root, however, they wanted no interference in their department's affairs. They were used to running a department by themselves and junior faculty had little voice in making decisions. The chair would routinely call for votes by first asking all in favor raise their hands and then asking all "contrary minded" to do the same. They made the decisions in closed meetings, where they believed they could say whatever they wanted with neither fear nor trepidation. Thus, the junior faculty meeting in a pub on one occasion played a game in which we sought to cast our senior colleagues for a part in Alice in Wonderland. We had to stop though when everyone agreed there was one person who fit both the role of the little white rabbit who was "late for an important date" and the Red Queen who ordered those around to "cut off their heads!"

There was, however, one particular exception to those I have been describing. Chuck Jacob, an associate professor when I arrived and later the department chair, was among the warmest, most welcoming, and truly collegial individuals I have known in the profession. We helped design a course in literature and politics and Chuck, who was a student of bureaucracies, chose to lecture on Kafka's *The Castle*, a genuinely classic novel. By contrast, I must admit my choice was *Dr. Strangelove*. Chuck and I had an amusing game in which we pasted trivia questions on each other's office door which we had to answer (e.g., "Who was Magda Lupescu?"). Keep in mind, there was no Google available then. Chuck also hosted parties in which the guests referred to themselves as "The Last of the Martini Tiplers." Dick Wilson was another delightful boozier whose navy rum was a favorite of mine. Dick was already a highly visible and learned student of Chinese politics, and we would particularly enjoy discussing students who confused "sinology" with "sinusology." As this suggests, undergraduate writing skills had already begun to deteriorate,

The senior clique were rudely surprised, however, when my dear friend Barbara Calloway, then I believe in a temporary position, brought suit against them for gender bias, and the EEOC forced them to repeat a number of rather rude remarks they had made about her in camera. Happily, Barb was given a permanent position, rose to full professor, and would later become an associate provost and the best darn university administrator the department would ever see with the obvious exception of Harvey Waterman in the graduate school.

Some years later I met another of the senior members on the stairs leading to our offices. I said hello X, and he turned to me and asked "What do you do here??" He

seemed to forget we were in the same department even though I had been there for several years. The same individual repeatedly came to meetings on promotion without having read the files of the candidates. Indeed, on one memorable occasion, he literally confused two candidates who were up for tenure, one a Marxist theorist of political economy and the other a quantitative methodologist. He voted in favor of the former and against the latter but had confused them and the following day apologized to the methodologist, declaring "I only voted against you because I hate Marxism!" I recall that when Gerry was chair he seriously wanted to require this individual as well as other to take a test about candidates before they could vote. I had to point out that would violate institutional rules.

When Jim was a topic, they could be venomous. On one occasion after Nora, Jim's wife, had suffered a miscarriage, one senior member looked at another and said, "they can't even get that right!" I would later discover an exchange of acerbic letters in a department file between Jim and the senior IR faculty member at University College. Jim was on the verge of leaving Rutgers and heading to Ohio State. He had been sent a copy of a letter the other chap had sent a dean in which he had written, "I will never go to another faculty meeting at which Jim Rosenau is present." Jim sent him a letter which read, "Dear X, I have come across a letter in which you say will never come to another meeting at which I am present. You have given me an excellent reason to stay at Rutgers. How would you like that?" Rosenau may have been a bit paranoid when he called me on one occasion and suggested I call him from another phone because he believed that the college department chair was recording our phone messages. On the other hand, maybe he was right.

Jim was the only one present with whose scholarship I was familiar and who was in the field of international relations. I thus assumed that he would ultimately determine who would be selected to the position and thus my destiny, and I made a special effort to have a dialogue with him while giving short shrift to the questions of the others in the room. Only later did I discover the enmity that existed between Jim and those four senior members of the Rutgers College Department who were fighting for their department's autonomy against Jim's efforts to integrate the several departments into a single university unit, a struggle that would continue in the following years. I recall this experience in some detail because I later wondered how the college-level department could possibly have hired me inasmuch as it must have been evident that I was spending a disproportionate amount of time chatting with Rosenau.

Jim would quickly become my mentor and a source of innumerable theoretical ideas (some good and some bad but all fascinating) that guided my own scholarship after Jim left for Ohio States a couple of years later and even until he passed away. Indeed, Yale Ferguson and I dedicated our book *Remapping Global Politics* to "our friend and mentors James Rosenau."

By the time Jim left the several department had become ever more integrated. Jim's successors Gerry Pomper and Steve Salmore ably completed the merger. On occasion the new single department would have meetings with the political science departments from the Newark and Camden campuses. One of those meeting was held in a room at the School of Agriculture, the door of which had a sign that seemed fitting for a department of political science. It read: "Bull Semen". It was in the course of those

meetings that I got to know Yale Ferguson well, thereby beginning our close collaboration of over four decades.

Although by then the department had been completely changed, there remained several individuals from the original Rutgers College department. At one meeting, I was chairing a discussion regarding the prospect of allowing a prominent African-American member of the Newark department whose scholarly area was African politics join the New Brunswick department. One of those “individuals” spoke against allowing this to take place and said (this is almost a direct quote), “We already have several Africanists in the department and in any event there are more Blacks in Newark than New Brunswick and they therefore need him more than do we!” (Stunned silence around the room.) The following day my senior colleague rushed in to complain that Roberta Siegel – one of the most wonderful and visible colleagues in our department – had written him a note in which she called him “racist.” The individual in question that said, “But I said was...” and repeated verbatim what he had said the previous day.

If Jim was my mentor, Gerry was “my” chair because he tenured me – whether wisely or foolishly only he can say. Gerry would essentially complete the process of integrating the college departments. My only quarrel with Gerry was when I became department chair and Gerry being Gerry wanted an appointment in American politics every time we made an appointment in any other subfield. Like a good political scientist he wanted a “quo” for any “quid.” During that time the so-called field committees (members of the several subfields) became very important for what was then a very large department. For much of the time I was in New Brunswick, Political Philosophy was rightly regarded as the premier subfield with luminaries including Barber, Carey

McWilliams, Gordon Schochet, and Sebastian de Grazia (who appropriately was then widely known for his research on “leisure”).

Sebastian was fed and housed at Eagleton in a building envied by all. We would hold meetings there whenever possible, hoping its associates would wine and dine us at a level only their budget could sustain. In addition to its excellent graduate programs in practical politics and in Women and Politics, our host at Eagleton was Alan Rosenthal, then director and a scholar noted for his extraordinary humor and kindness. He was one of those rare individuals who made attending meetings a pleasure rather than a chore.

Doctoral candidates were required to qualify in three subfields. All members of the graduate faculty voted on the admission of candidates to that program. On one occasion the day after a meeting, a graduate student came to my office where I was in the middle of a game of chess with my TA. I had never seen the student before but he came into my office, asked who I was and then jumped on me, knocking over the chess game. He was a rather weedy young man whom I later learned was a political philosophy student and a libertarian by belief who had refused to take courses in other subfields and thus been turned down for admission to the program. I made my way to the office and suggested the secretary might want to call campus police to get the guy out of my office. A burly detective showed up shortly later, and the next thing I knew he and the graduate student were rolling over the floor of the hallway. I was then called to the telephone to speak with Sebastian who had been informed of what was happening. Sebastian asked me to bring the young man to the phone but I told him that was impossible because the two of them were rolling over the floor and the detective was currently on top. The next day the campus police called to ask me to bring charges because the detective had had to use

force to arrest the kid. This event was during the Vietnam War, and the police wanted me to bring a charge under a New Jersey law passed to deal with bomb threats and the like which carried a 5-year jail sentence. I refused, explaining that 5 years in the clink for merely upsetting my chess set seemed a bit harsh.

On another occasion to which Roy can attest I came to a graduate meeting after having had dinner with a group of undergraduates. They had fed me brownies laced with pot, very good too, but I was, well, tipsy. When I arrived at the graduate committee meeting I feared someone might note I was behaving oddly. The next I asked the good Professor Licklider whether I had acted oddly, and he told me that he knew something was amiss because it was the first meeting he had attended at which I had said nothing.

I became department chair in 1983 and served until I left Rutgers for a big hike in pay and a permanent three-course load after I stepped down as chair at Iowa State. (In reality, I left because Rhoda was expecting a little girl who is currently ABD in Physics, and we would have had to pay a fortune for a larger house with a reasonable commute to New Brunswick.) I became chair at Rutgers largely because Steve Salmore had become ill and had to step down. I had little to say about the decision, which was initially a one-year appointment, because I was “informed” while I was still on a leave of absence, working for an unmentionable agency just outside of Washington. I was voted into the position the following year.

The accomplishments of Gerry and Steve before me made my life relatively easy as chair, and the department’s integration facilitated bargaining as a single unit with the several college deans who wished us to give courses on their campus which we would do at a price to their budgets. One impediment remained, however. The AAUP was the

bargaining agent in states with a closed shop. Two unfortunate consequences were that contractual issues including salary increments were invariably a year or two late and there was virtually no merit funding, making it difficult to reward individuals who performed particularly well as teachers and scholars.

As for the department, I had to make one very difficult change to complete its integration. Previously, each undergraduate department had its own “head” secretary. I had to select one to carry out this chore and assign another two to the undergraduate and graduate chairs respectively. I selected Phyllis Moditz, and it proved an ideal choice. In the process, unfortunately, one of the other secretaries declared war against me and ultimately left in a giant huff. Happily, Ruth Bennett remained and as had been the case at Douglass early proved a tower of strength running the undergraduate program almost by herself. (Only a fool would dare gainsay her.)

I am also proud of the fact that none of my colleagues grieved *successfully* regarding any of my actions. I must admit, however, that there was one colleague who repeatedly tried to do so, and after losing one grievance during a sabbatical year then grieved again on the basis that he should be awarded another sabbatical because he had spent so much time in the initial grievance. Sympathize with your current leader, recognizing that a chair’s life is not always one of wine and roses.

I will say little about my years as chair except that I enjoyed them enormously; we promoted some super people like Susan Lawrence; and we hired some terrific junior faculty. There were, of course, also disappointments because Rutgers was going through a phase of trying to emulate Harvard, and one result was its refusal to promote a number

of excellent and deserving junior faculty who went on elsewhere to have highly productive careers.

As an IR specialist I was particularly gratified by hiring Ed Rhodes, an immensely learned and humorous person with whom I have edited two books, and John Vasquez, a leading student on the causes of war, with whom I wrote a book. John, fearful that he was a minority hire, informed me that he would not accept such a position and was proudly Sicilian. They, along with Roy, helped constitute a productive and very amicable group. (My only complaint about Professor Licklider was his dreadful habit of telling the absolute truth in meetings in which I thought understating the flaws of my arguments would have been preferable.) Happily, we had a number of doctoral students who went on to highly successful careers such as Tom O'Donnell, Harley Barnes, Dan Geller, and Ed Lacey among others. Certainly, however, among the most delightful, erudite, and generally idiosyncratic additions was Milt Heumann. Milt late would become chair, and I can only imagine what department meetings would have been like with Milty at the helm. I miss him greatly.

When I left we numbered some 58 faculty, still had problems of subfield diversity and overlap inherited from the college departments, and had just completed an extremely successful external review. Indeed, shortly after I left the university president wanted to congratulate me, only to discover that I was no longer there. The only problem with the review was that the provost insisted on housing the reviewers at a cheap motel which I called the Roach Motel and claimed (falsely) advertised that it rented rooms by the hour. My last act before leaving was to turn over one of the corner suites in Hickman, previously used by the History Department to advise students at Douglass to Ben Barber

for his newly established Whitman institute. I then quickly left before the historians could discover what I had done. Ben was suitably grateful. Still, the link with Rutgers remains. Thus, we recently hired two enormously talented graduate students from Rutgers here at Iowa State – Tessa di Tonto and David Anderson – with whom I suffered living through the recent presidential campaign and election and with I fear we will suffer even more in the near future.